

FACT SHEET

MINNESOTA GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM

July 2004

Overview

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary program that helps landowners and operators restore and protect grassland, including rangeland and pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. The program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conversion.

GRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) administer the program. Funding for the GRP comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

Sign-up Dates

Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis; however, August 2, 2004 is the cut off date for the first scoring and ranking of applications. Once funding has been exhausted, eligible applicants will remain on file until additional funding becomes available.

Benefits

Restoring and protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and improves environmental quality.

How GRP Works

Applications may be filed for an easement or rental agreement with either NRCS or FSA county office personnel at any time. Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land while retaining the right to conduct conservation grazing practices; limited hay or harvesting for seed production (restrictions limit some activities during the nesting season of bird species that are in significant decline or those that are protected under Federal or State law); and conduct fire rehabilitation and construct firebreaks and fences.

Eligibility

Landowners who can provide clear title are eligible to submit an application for either a permanent or 30-year easement option. Landowners and others who have general control of the acreage may submit an application for a rental agreement.

The Adjusted Gross Income provision of the 2002 Farm Bill impacts eligibility for GRP and several other 2002 Farm Bill programs. Individuals or entities that have an average adjusted gross income exceeding \$2.5 million for the three tax years immediately preceding the year the contract is approved are not eligible to receive program benefits or payments. However, an exemption is provided in cases where 75 percent of the adjusted gross income is derived from farming, ranching, or forestry operations.

Eligible land includes grassland or land that contains forbs or shrubs (including improved rangeland and pastureland); and grassland or land that is located in an area that historically has been dominated by grassland, forbs, and shrubs and has potential to provide habitat for animal or plant populations of significant ecological value if the land is retained in its current use or restored to a natural condition. Incidental lands may be included to allow for the efficient administration of an agreement or easement.

Offers must include no less than 40 contiguous acres, unless CCC determines a small parcel is appropriate to achieve the purposes of the program.

Ranking Criteria

Applications will be scored and ranked with emphasis on:

- support for grazing operations;
- maintaining and preserving biodiversity of plants and animals; and
- grasslands with the greatest risk of conversion.

The program offers several enrollment options

Permanent Easement. This is a conservation easement in perpetuity. Easement payments for this option equal the fair market value, less the grazing value of the land encumbered by the easement. These values will be determined using an appraisal process.

30-year Easement. USDA will provide an easement payment equal to 30 percent of the fair market value of the land, less the grazing value of the land for the period during which the land is encumbered by the easement.

For both easement options, USDA will provide all administrative costs associated with recording the easement, including appraisal fees, survey costs, title insurance and recording fees. Easement payments may be provided, at the participant's request, in lump sum or annual payments (equal or unequal amounts) for up to 10 years.

Rental Agreement. Participants have the option of choosing a 10-year, 15-year, 20-year, or 30-year agreement. USDA will provide annual payments in an amount that is not more than 75 percent of the grazing value of the land (see following page) covered by the agreement for the life of the agreement. Payments will be disbursed on the agreement anniversary date each year.

County	GRP Rental Rate \$ Per Acre	County	GRP Rental Rate \$ Per Acre
Aitkin	7.00	Martin	16.50
Anoka	10.00	Meeker	16.50
Becker	10.00	Mille Lacs	8.50
Beltrami	7.00	Morrison	8.50
Benton	9.50	Mower	16.50
Big Stone	16.50	Murray	16.50
Blue Earth	16.50	Nicollet	16.50
Brown	16.50	Nobles	16.50
Carlton	5.50	Norman	10.50
Carver	16.50	Olmsted	16.50
Cass	7.00	East Otter Tail	11.00
Chippewa	16.50	West Otter Tail	11.00
Chisago	9.50	Pennington	8.50
Clay	11.50	Pine	7.00
Clearwater	7.50	Pipestone	16.50
Cook	5.50	East Polk	9.00
Cottonwood	16.50	West Polk	9.50
Crow Wing	7.00	Pope	14.00
Dakota	16.50	Ramsey	14.00
Dodge	16.50	Red Lake	8.50
Douglas	11.00	Redwood	16.50
Faribault	16.50	Renville	16.50
Fillmore	16.50	Rice	16.50
Freeborn	16.50	Rock	16.50
Goodhue	16.50	Roseau	7.50
Grant	13.00	North St. Louis	5.50
Hennepin	14.00	South St. Louis	5.50
Houston	16.50	Scott	16.50
Hubbard	8.00	Sherburne	9.50
Isanti	9.50	Sibley	16.50
Itasca	5.50	Stearns	14.00
Jackson	16.50	Steele	16.50
Kanabec	8.50	Stevens	15.50
Kandiyohi	16.50	Swift	16.50
Kittson	8.50	Todd	9.50
Koochiching	5.50	Traverse	15.00
Lac Qui Parle	16.50	Wabasha	16.50
Lake	5.50	Wadena	8.50
Lake of the Woods	7.00	Waseca	16.50
Le Sueur	16.50	Washington	14.00
Lincoln	16.50	Watsonwan	16.50
Lyon	16.50	Wilkin	13.50
McLeod	16.50	Winona	16.50
Mahnomen	9.50	Wright	14.00
Marshall	8.50	Yellow Medicine	16.50

For More Information

If you need more information about GRP, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture. Information also is available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/>

Note: This is not intended to be a definitive interpretation of farm legislation. Rather, it is preliminary and may change as USDA develops implementing policies and procedures. Please check back for updates.